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Letter dated 11 July 2008 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

In my capacity as Chairman of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, I have the honour to submit a report on the activities of the Working Group since the submission of my last annual report on 10 July 2007.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and the enclosed report issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jean-Maurice **Ripert**

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Annual report on the activities of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005) (1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008)

I. Introduction

1. On 26 July 2005, the Security Council adopted resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict, sponsored jointly by Benin and France.

2. In paragraph 8 of the resolution, the Council decided to establish a working group of the Security Council to review the reports of the mechanism referred to in paragraph 3 of the resolution, to review progress in the development and implementation of the action plans mentioned in paragraph 7 of the resolution and to consider other relevant information presented to it; and decided further that the working group should:

(a) Make recommendations to the Council on possible measures to promote the protection of children affected by armed conflict, including through recommendations on appropriate mandates for peacekeeping missions and recommendations with respect to the parties to the conflict;

(b) Address requests, as appropriate, to other bodies within the United Nations system for action to support implementation of the resolution in accordance with their respective mandates.

3. Pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), the Chairman of the Working Group submitted reports to the Council on developments in relation to the Working Group for the periods from 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006 (S/2006/497) and from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 (S/2007/428). Since the issuance of the latter report, the Working Group has held seven formal meetings, on 19 July, 18 September and 6 December 2007 and on 5 February, 21 February, 8 May and 20 June 2008. Following each of those meetings, the Chairman issued a brief press release; all the press releases are available on the website of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations.

II. Substantive issues addressed

9th meeting

4. At its 9th meeting, on 19 July 2007, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Somalia (S/2007/259) and Uganda (S/2007/260). Those conclusions were published as documents S/AC.51/2007/14 and S/AC.51/2007/12, respectively. The Chairman of the Working Group then carried out the tasks entrusted to him in the context of those conclusions, including by drawing the attention of the Security Council to the need to follow up on the recommendations addressed to it.

5. At that meeting, the Group also discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Chad (S/2007/400). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, introduced the Secretary-General's report and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) The security situation in Chad had worsened, triggering an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Those circumstances had created an environment in which children suffered abuses and the perpetrators went unpunished;

(b) The recruitment of children by all the parties to the conflict had increased sharply in eastern Chad, particularly in camps for refugees and displaced persons, and many children had been forced by their own communities to join self-defence groups. The nature and fragmentation of the armed groups made the extent of the phenomenon even more difficult to ascertain;

(c) There had been an alarming increase in sexual violence and in the culture of impunity surrounding those crimes;

(d) The Secretary-General recommended that the international community should rapidly intervene in Darfur and eastern Chad to provide security and protection for the most vulnerable populations, and also that the culture of impunity should be addressed. He noted that the Government of Chad had begun to engage in dialogue.

6. The Permanent Representative of Chad presented the point of view of his Government. The Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

7. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of the State concerned and of the exchange of views among the members of the Group are reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions subsequently adopted by the Working Group at its 10th meeting (S/AC.51/2007/16).

8. At its 9th meeting, the Working Group also discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2007/391). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict introduced the report and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) In that second report, the Secretary-General noted the progress made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the issuance of the first report (S/2006/389): a 20 per cent decrease in the number of child killing and maiming incidents documented, an 8 per cent decrease in the recruitment and use of children and the release of most of the children associated with armed groups;

(b) The trial of Thomas Lubanga by the International Criminal Court would be the first in which the only charge to date was the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict; the Office of the Special Representative would soon file an amicus curiae brief in the context of that trial;

(c) The situation in the provinces of Ituri and Kivu was of grave concern, as children continued to be recruited and to suffer sexual violence in a climate of impunity. The Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), in particular, continued to attack and terrorize the population;

(d) There was a need for the national and international authorities to devote greater attention to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration issues, as a large number of demobilized children were still awaiting appropriate care and follow-up;

(e) Lastly, perpetrators of violations of children's rights had not always been brought to justice, despite the Working Group's recommendations; some of them had been arrested, but had subsequently escaped.

9. The Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo presented the point of view of his Government. The Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

10. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of the State concerned and of the exchange of views among the members of the Group are reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions subsequently adopted by the Working Group at its 10th meeting (S/AC.51/2007/17).

11. Daniel Toole, Deputy Executive Director and Director of the Office of Emergency Programmes of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), then presented the Secretary-General's "horizontal note", placing particular emphasis on the situation of children in the occupied Palestinian territories, Sri Lanka and the Sudan:

(a) In the occupied Palestinian territories, the number of children killed or injured as a result of the conflict had increased in the most recent period, and the restrictions on movement had adversely affected access to education;

(b) In Sri Lanka, children continued to be recruited by armed groups and to be killed or injured in the conflict; humanitarian access was insufficiently guaranteed. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Karuna group were still recruiting and, in some cases, even re-recruiting children. However, for the first time, the number of children released had exceeded the number of children recruited. Lastly, the Government of Sri Lanka had established a structure specifically tasked with following up on violations related to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005);

(c) In the Sudan, on 11 June 2007, UNICEF had signed an action plan with the Minawi faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), which had pledged to end recruitment and release all children under the age of 18. That agreement represented a very important advance in the protection of children in the Sudan.

12. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General reported to the Group on her visit to Myanmar in the context of the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism provided for in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

13. Lastly, the Chairman of the Working Group reported on his contacts with the countries whose situations were referred to in annex II to the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (A/62/609-S/2007/757). In particular, he welcomed the confirmation by the Government of the Philippines that it had decided to accept the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism provided for in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). He also reported on the positive nature of his contacts with the Government of Colombia on that issue, which gave reason to hope that progress would be made in the discussions between the Secretariat and the Colombian authorities on the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

10th meeting

14. At its 10th meeting, on 18 September 2007, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Chad (S/2007/400). Those conclusions were published as document S/AC.51/2007/16. The Chairman of the Working Group then carried out the tasks entrusted to him in the context of those conclusions, including by drawing the attention of the Security Council to the need to follow up on the recommendations addressed to it.

15. At that meeting, the Working Group also discussed the draft conclusions on the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2007/391). As no consensus was reached at the meeting, the conclusions were subsequently adopted under the no-objection procedure on 15 October 2007 and were published on 25 October 2007 as document S/AC.51/2007/17. The Chairman of the Working Group then carried out the tasks entrusted to him in the context of those conclusions, including by drawing the attention of the Security Council to the need to follow up on the recommendations addressed to it.

16. Also at the 10th meeting, the Group discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2007/515). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General introduced the report and made the following points:

(a) Developments in Côte d'Ivoire since the issuance of the first report (S/2006/835) constituted a model of success and effectiveness and showed that the Group's determination to ensure compliance with resolution 1612 (2005), together with the threat of sanctions, had worked. During her visit to the country, the Special Representative had found that the action plans and their implementation were satisfactory. Accordingly, in consultation with all partners, Côte d'Ivoire had been removed from the list annexed to the Secretary-General's December 2007 report on children and armed conflict;

(b) However, while child recruitment had ceased, many cases of sexual violence had been reported, and those crimes continued to go unpunished.

17. The Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire presented the point of view of his Government. The Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

18. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of the State concerned and of the exchange of views among the members of the Group are reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions subsequently adopted by the Working Group at its 11th meeting (S/AC.51/2008/5).

19. Also at its 10th meeting, the Working Group also discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Sudan (S/2007/520). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General introduced the report and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) That second report highlighted the improvement in the overall situation in the Sudan since the issuance of the first report (S/2006/662), but also the continuing concerns with respect to the situation in Darfur. During her visit to the

region, the Special Representative had noted the deterioration of the social fabric and of traditional structures, which had engendered a climate of insecurity for the population and impunity for perpetrators of violations;

(b) In Darfur, particularly in refugee camps, children were subject to ongoing abuses: recruitment, sexual violence and abduction were on the rise. The situation of insecurity was seriously disrupting humanitarian access to the population;

(c) Lastly, during the Special Representative's visit, the authorities and some of the armed groups had undertaken commitments for the protection of women and children (including the signing of an action plan by UNICEF and the Minawi faction of SLA), and the monitoring and reporting process was becoming more and more rigorous and systematic.

20. The Permanent Representative of the Sudan presented the point of view of his Government. The Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

21. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of the State concerned and of the exchange of views among the members of the Group are reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions subsequently adopted by the Working Group at its 11th meeting (S/AC.51/2008/7).

22. Hilde Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, then presented the Secretary-General's "horizontal note", placing particular emphasis on the situation of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Somalia:

(a) In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the situation in the province of North Kivu had once again deteriorated. Many cases of child recruitment had been documented. Children were used not only for combat but also as cooks, spies or escorts. In addition, cases of rape and sexual violence against children were of grave concern. The third phase of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme had begun in the province of Ituri on 4 August 2007: 201 children had been released, but 40 of them had reportedly been re-recruited;

(b) In Somalia, the number of children killed or injured had increased as a direct result of continued insecurity and an escalation in violence. Children continued to be recruited and used by the various parties to the conflict; in particular, they were used to hide explosive devices.

11th meeting

23. At its 11th meeting, on 6 December 2007, the Working Group discussed the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Myanmar (S/2007/666).

24. The Special Representative introduced the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Myanmar and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) The Government of Myanmar had agreed to the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the related country task force, but access to conflict areas and recruitment centres needed to be improved;

(b) Access to conflict areas was also necessary for the purpose of assessing the needs of the population, especially children;

(c) The recruitment and use of children remained a cause of concern. However, the Government of Myanmar had taken specific measures to combat that phenomenon, establishing a high-level committee on the issue, and the Karen National Union and Karenni National Progressive Party armed groups had signed "Deeds of Commitment" in April 2007, with a view to ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children.

25. The Permanent Representative of Myanmar presented the point of view of his Government. The Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

26. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of the State concerned and of the exchange of views among the members of the Group will be reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions to be formally adopted by the Working Group at its next meeting, to be held early in July 2008.

27. Also at its 11th meeting, the Group discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Burundi (S/2007/686). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General introduced the Secretary-General's report and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) In that second report, the Secretary-General highlighted the numerous advances made since the issuance of the first report (S/2006/851 and Corr.1) and the recommendations of the Working Group: the release in March 2007 of children still being detained because of their association with armed groups; the considerable decrease, in the wake of the ceasefire, in reported cases of killing and maiming; and the commitments made by the Government of Burundi to bring to justice a growing number of members of the security forces responsible for serious violations of children's rights;

(b) However, the Forces nationales de libération continued to recruit and use children, and there had been an 80 per cent increase in the number of reported rapes and other acts of sexual violence against children since the preceding year.

28. The Permanent Representative of Burundi presented the point of view of his Government. The Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

29. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of the State concerned and of the exchange of views among the members of the Group are reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions subsequently adopted by the Working Group at its 12th meeting (S/AC.51/2008/6).

30. The Associate Director and Chief of Child Protection of UNICEF, Karin Landgren, then presented the Secretary-General's "horizontal note", placing particular emphasis on the situation of children in Afghanistan and Nepal:

(a) In Afghanistan, the rising number of suicide attacks by "anti-Government groups" and the use of explosive devices had led to an increase in the number of children killed or injured. Most schools were closed because of threats and attacks

by those groups. Children were used in many capacities, with credible allegations that some of them, mainly boys, were used for sexual purposes by local commanders;

(b) In Nepal, the Government had made progress in honouring its commitment to rehabilitate children who had been recruited by the armed forces and armed groups. However, many children were still being held in cantonments under the control of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist. Cases of children who had been released and then forced to return to the cantonments had been documented.

12th meeting

31. At its 12th meeting, on 5 February 2008, the Working Group adopted conclusions on the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2007/515), the Sudan (S/2007/520) and Burundi (S/2007/686). Those conclusions were published as documents S/AC.51/2008/5, S/AC.51/2008/7 and S/AC.51/2008/6, respectively. The Chairman of the Working Group then carried out the tasks entrusted to him in the context of those conclusions, including by drawing the attention of the Security Council to the need to follow up on the recommendations addressed to it.

32. At the same meeting, at the request of several delegations, the Group took up the issue of its working methods, in particular to follow up on an informal meeting of experts held on 25 January 2008 to address the subject. It was decided that the Chairman of the Working Group should address a letter to the Chairman of the Security Council Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions to inform him of the issues and questions raised by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in connection with its working methods.

13th meeting

33. At its 13th meeting, on 21 February 2008, the Working Group discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Sri Lanka (S/2007/758).

34. Carolina Owens, representing the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, introduced the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Sri Lanka and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) In the report, the Secretary-General welcomed the commitments made by the Government of Sri Lanka, in particular in relation to the transfer of children to child-appropriate facilities;

(b) However, LTTE and Tamil Makkal Viduthali Pulikal (TMVP) continued to recruit children, although some of them had been released, and neither of those armed groups had implemented a real action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children;

(c) For the fifth time in a row, LTTE had been included on the list annexed to the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (A/62/609-S/2007/757). The threat of sanctions against that group should henceforth be accompanied by action;

(d) The Secretary-General stressed the difficulty of gaining access to conflict areas and requested the Government to facilitate dialogue with non-State groups and to make every effort to ensure the security of schools and hospitals.

35. The Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka presented the point of view of his Government. The Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

36. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of the State concerned and of the exchange of views among the members of the Group will be reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions to be formally adopted by the Working Group at its next meeting, to be held early in July 2008.

14th meeting

37. At its 14th meeting, on 8 May 2008, the Working Group discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Philippines (S/2008/272).

38. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General introduced the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in the Philippines and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) That first report on the Philippines highlighted the recruitment and use of children by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the New People's Army and the Abu Sayyaf Group. Children had also been killed or injured in the conflict;

(b) The Government of the Philippines had demonstrated its positive engagement by agreeing to the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism, inviting the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to visit the country in 2008 and setting up exemplary legal and political structures to improve child protection. However, more remained to be done to ensure practical implementation by all stakeholders and to strengthen dialogue with armed groups with a view to securing the rapid and unconditional release of children.

39. The Permanent Representative of the Philippines presented the point of view of his Government. The Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

40. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of the State concerned and of the exchange of views among the members of the Group will be reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions to be formally adopted by the Working Group at its next meeting, to be held early in July 2008.

41. Also at its 14th meeting, the Working Group adopted an indicative programme of work for the period from May 2008 to April 2009 and agreed to review that programme in December 2008. The programme organizes the Group's workload for the period up until the submission of the next report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (May 2009) and allows both the Secretary-General and the members of the Group to decide when a given situation should be considered and to plan accordingly. It can also serve as a basis for providing advance notice to the Permanent Missions of the countries concerned when the Working Group is

about to consider a report of the Secretary-General on a situation that concerns them directly.

42. The Director of the Programme Division of UNICEF, Nicholas K. Alipui, then presented the Secretary-General's "horizontal note", placing particular emphasis on the situation of children in Burundi, Sri Lanka and the occupied Palestinian territories:

(a) In Burundi, despite the deterioration in the security situation, 232 children recruited by armed groups had been released after eight months of efforts on the part of the Government, civil society and United Nations agencies;

(b) In Sri Lanka, the security situation was a cause for concern, but 39 children had been released by TMVP in April 2007;

(c) In the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel, the number of children killed or injured had increased in the first quarter of 2008 owing to an upsurge in violence between the parties to the conflict. In addition, schools were being affected more often by the conflict.

43. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General briefed the Working Group about her visit to Iraq, from 20 to 25 April 2008. She noted that many children were no longer going to school, that many had been recruited into various armed groups for violent activities, that some children had been detained in custody allegedly for violent activities, that they lacked access to the most basic services, that humanitarian access was limited in many parts of the country, and that an increasing number of cases of gender-based violence were also being reported.

15th meeting

44. At its 15th meeting, on 20 June 2008, the Working Group discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nepal (S/2008/259).

45. The Special Representative introduced the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Nepal and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) That second report on the situation in Nepal (the first had been issued as document S/2006/1007) highlighted the significant decrease in the number of violations of children's rights since the signing of the ceasefire agreement and the transition to an elected Government. However, the parties to the peace process should take the necessary measures for the release and reintegration of the hundreds of children identified in cantonments;

(b) Children were being used with increasing frequency by armed groups in the Terai region;

(c) The process of incorporating the international treaties ratified by Nepal into domestic law had been delayed and the draft law for the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was flawed, as it did not make any special provision for children and included provisions on amnesty for perpetrators of human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law.

46. The Permanent Representative of Nepal presented the point of view of his Government. The Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

47. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of the State concerned and of the exchange of views among the members of the Group will be reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions to be adopted by the Working Group.

48. Also at its 15th meeting, the Group discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Somalia (S/2008/352). The Special Representative introduced the Secretary-General's report and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) There had been a significant increase in violence owing to the absence of the rule of law and easy access to weapons, with devastating consequences for civilians, especially children;

(b) The recruitment and use of children by all the parties to the conflict remained very widespread, and the number of rapes and other acts of sexual violence against children had increased; the Secretary-General recommended that the perpetrators of those violations be prosecuted and sentenced;

(c) Lastly, the Secretary-General urged the Transitional Federal Government to engage in a genuine reconciliation process with all factions. That process should include specific child protection and rehabilitation measures to create conditions for security and stability.

49. The Permanent Representative of Somalia presented the point of view of his Government. The Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

50. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of the State concerned and of the exchange of views among the members of the Group will be reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions to be adopted by the Working Group.

51. Ms. Landgren then presented the Secretary-General's "horizontal note", placing particular emphasis on the situation of children in Afghanistan, Chad and the Sudan:

(a) In Afghanistan, the conflict continued to have a serious impact on children, who were being killed or maimed as a result of suicide attacks, air strikes, landmines and explosive remnants of war, recruited by anti-Government elements and detained by judicial authorities because of their alleged association with such elements; moreover, they were victims of attacks on schools and of denial of humanitarian access. A monitoring and reporting mechanism was being established in that difficult security environment;

(b) In Chad, the political and security situation remained fragile; children in conflict areas were victims of killings, maimings, continued recruitment and sexual violence, and humanitarian access was still difficult;

(c) In the Sudan, although there were ongoing violations of children's rights, some progress had been made as a result of the agreement reached between the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration commissions in the northern and southern parts of the country for the tracing and reintegration of children. On 14 May 2008, 88 children between the ages of 12 and 17 had been released by the Sudan People's Liberation Army.

52. At the same meeting, with respect to the issue of the Group's working methods, a consensus was reached on the content of the letter to be addressed, in accordance with the decision taken at the Working Group's 12th meeting, to the Chairman of the Security Council Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions. That letter, which had been discussed intensively by the experts, included three annexes: a general summary of the informal meeting of experts held on 25 January 2008, "guidelines" regarding the Group's working methods and a list of questions concerning, inter alia, the practice of the Security Council and its other subsidiary bodies.

53. Lastly, the Working Group reached agreement on a procedural issue concerning modalities for the transmission of letters to be sent in implementation of the various conclusions adopted by the Working Group. It was decided that all letters to the Secretary-General and to the Governments of the States concerned would henceforth be addressed to them by the Chairman of the Working Group and transmitted with a cover letter from the President of the Security Council. Once that procedural issue had been settled, it was agreed that the draft conclusions on children and armed conflict in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and the Philippines would be formally adopted at a meeting to be held early in July 2008.

III. Final observations

54. The increase in the Working Group's activities over the preceding period was not reversed; the Working Group considered the situation of children in 10 conflict situations on the basis of reports of the Secretary-General produced in the context of the monitoring and reporting mechanism provided for in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). That trend is likely to continue, as the contacts between the Secretariat, the Chairman of the Working Group and the countries concerned have made it possible to prepare for or carry out the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism provided for in resolution 1612 (2005) in all the conflict situations referred to in the annexes to the Secretary-General's most recent report on children and armed conflict (A/62/609-S/2007/757) and to include these situations in the Group's programme of work for the period from May 2008 to April 2009.

55. The Working Group pursued its efforts to engage in dialogue with the countries concerned, all of which participated in the Group's consideration of their situation and made comments upon the adoption of conclusions concerning them, despite the difficulties often encountered in providing the relevant documents to those countries within a reasonable time frame. The Group also made further efforts to enhance the transparency of its work by continuing to include in its conclusions a general summary of the discussions held at its formal meetings.

56. Once the Group has formally adopted its conclusions on Myanmar, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, it will have completed the adoption of substantive conclusions on all the situations on its programme of work for 2007 and adopted the first conclusions on a situation on its programme of work for the period from May 2008 to April 2009. The Working Group currently tends to adopt conclusions containing more detailed recommendations addressed to the various stakeholders with the aim of providing them with more operational tools, thereby helping to bring about tangible — and, if possible, faster — improvements in the situation of children in the various armed conflicts brought to its attention. The Working Group seeks to

ensure that its recommendations take due account of all the violations reported to it in the Secretary-General's reports.

57. The development of the Secretariat of the monitoring tool known as the "horizontal note" submitted periodically to the Working Group, the mission reports of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Group's practice of taking up for a second time certain situations that it has already considered and on which it has adopted an initial set of conclusions have enhanced its ability to gauge the progress made and identify areas in which new actions and recommendations are needed. Although the results are still uneven, it may be noted with satisfaction that varying degrees of progress have been made in a number of situations considered by the Working Group, such as the implementation of action plans, the initiation or resumption of discussions on the action plans between certain armed groups and United Nations task forces, the release of children, the decrease in recruitment, the establishment of focal points in Government administrations and the provision of services to children in the appropriate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

58. While all these developments are positive, they have naturally entailed a significant excess workload for the Group that may have adversely affected the organization of its activities and prevented it from monitoring the implementation of its conclusions more methodically. It should be noted in this regard that one of the points on which the Working Group experts seemed to agree in their discussions on working methods is the need, in future, to provide the Working Group with more logistical support, particularly Secretariat services in such areas as the preparation of summary records of formal meetings, the preparation of draft conclusions, internal and external document transmission and administrative follow-up of the measures contained in the Group's conclusions, as is done for some of the other subsidiary bodies of the Security Council. Of course, such support will be all the more necessary should the Security Council decide, as the Secretary-General has proposed in his two most recent reports on children and armed conflict, to mandate the Working Group to consider situations of armed conflict involving the commission of violations against children other than the recruitment and use of children.